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ABSTRACT

The present state of English primary education is depicted in this overview and possible future trends affecting primary schools are indicated. Primary schools in England and Wales are normally those with pupils between 5 to 11 years of age. The term Primary Schools encompasses Infant Schools (for children ages 5 to 7); Junior Schools (ages 7 to 11); First Schools (usually ages 5 to 8); and, in some cases, Middle Schools (usually ages 8 to 13). Numbering around 23,000, the English primary schools are co-educational, free and attended by over 95% of the nation's 4 million plus children. The paper first presents general background information concerning advisory/inspectorate bodies for policy and practice; physical plant, equipment and materials; teacher education and training; and primary school ideologies. Current trends and issues discussed include (1) the general organization within the primary school, (2) declining enrollment and changing school organization, (3) curriculum organization and teaching style, (4) curriculum content, and (5) accountability and assessment. Recent key publications in education are identified and emphasized in order to discern possible future trends. Reports explored include the following: "Primary Education in England" (1978); "Assessment - The American Experience" (1978); "Local Authority Arrangements for the School Curriculum" (1978); and "Inside the Primary Classroom" (1980). In conclusion, 10 predictions for English primary education in the 1980s are briefly stated. A bibliography including selected recent and ongoing research is provided as well as two appendices that provide notes on the primary education report and chart trends in the school population. (Author/RH)

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PRIMARY EDUCATION IN ENGLAND:

AN OVERVIEW

by

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PRIMARY EDUCATION IN ENGLAND: AN OVERVIEW

PREFACE

The school curriculum for children aged 5 to 16 years has moved onto the political agenda. In January, 1980 the government consultative document A Framework for the School Curriculum was published. At about the same time H.M. Inspectorate published a somewhat different perspective A View of the Curriculum. The questions which lie behind the publication of those two papers are those which have been brought to the fore during the latter part of the 1970s. How should school curricula be determined, and how might schools become more accountable? These are indications of the way that the UK seems to be moving away from a position whereby the teaching profession (and its individual members, especially at primary level) acted as major determinants of the curriculum. Terms like 'standards', 'basics', 'comparability' are nowadays frequently heard in conjunction with discussions of the curriculum.

What follows, therefore, is an attempt to present a picture of the current state of English primary education and to extrapolate from official writings and research in order to provide some indication of possible trends in the future. In such a brief compass it is inevitably a simple interpretation, dependent upon personal selection, and demonstrating, no-doubt, sins of omission and commission. Moreover, it generalises and simplifies what is in reality a very flexible set of disparate beliefs, practices and provisions, as if they somehow represented one homogeneous system illustrative of the work of 23,000 English schools. Even brief summaries of primary education must take cognisance of a history and context of empiricism, pragmatism, inspiration and ambiguity, must show awareness

that local variation and personal autonomy have long played a strong part in provision. The root-stock is one of elementary standards and narrow belief nurtured in a bed of charity; the blossoming and branching, however, have often been of quite different quality and vigour.

I have taken the term curriculum to mean simply those things which teachers intentionally plan for children to learn and which they hope, and imply by their practice, that those children will become. It seems important from the outset to emphasise this latter aspect, the primary curriculum as 'human development', since it still represents such an important element in the ideology (in some cases the practice) of many early childhood educators.

Writing at a time when the silicon-chip revolution is ever increasing, reading official pronouncements at a time of two million unemployed, looking at educational provision or statements concerning the curriculum, one becomes aware of the short time-span most official scrutineers adopt. It is hard to believe that the most profound revolutions are occurring in manufacturing, in farming, in industries generally. One gains the impression that education is still imbued with a nineteenth century vision of the 'Protestant Ethic' - that, despite the odd disclaimer, it is about later gainful employment (as traditionally perceived), not about culture as a whole, the use of increasing leisure, increasing automation, increasingly sophisticated forms of communication. Clearly, curricular changes will need to reach all schools, primary schools especially, if the 'new' micro-technology is to be understood sufficiently

and exploited for the benefit of mankind. (The Schools Council estimates that only 20% of British Secondary Schools have computers, whereas France is installing 10,000 micro-computers in schools.) Whether the movements towards nationally agreed curricula will take account of all this is somewhat uncertain; there is relatively little sign of it yet. One thing is certain, however, we are witnessing some major changes in English education as we move towards a more centralised, more uniform and more accountable service.

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NOTE

Under the 1944 Education Act, PRIMARY SCHOOLS are all those with pupils under the age of twelve years. Such schools may be individually termed Primary, Infants, Juniors, First, or Middle (though in some cases Middle Schools can be classified as Secondary Schools).

1 INTRODUCTION

General background

The statutory primary school age range in England and Wales [1] is of children aged 5 to 11 years. Normally, such children are taught in Infant Schools (5 to 7 years) and Junior Schools (7 tc 11 years). There are a number of variants; First Schools (usually 5 to 8 years) and Middle Schools (usually 8 - 13 years).[2] Since about 1955 the number of primary schools in England and Wales has remained roughly stable at about 23,000, though total pupil numbers have fluctuated. (In 1973 there were about 5.25 million pupils in maintained nursery and primary schools; in 1979 about 4.75 million[3]). There are, however, marked changes concealed within the apparently stable total. In 1950 some 22% of the schools had fifty pupils or fewer. By 1975 only 8% of such schools existed. There has also been a trend, accelerating during this last decade, towards separate junior and infant schools (departments), though such schools do usually share the same primary school site.

Most state primary schools are co-educational and over 95% of the nation's children attend them. No fees of any kind are charged and all books and equipment are provided free.

For funding and administrative purposes primary schools are considered as being of two main kinds in England and Wales; county and and voluntary. The county primary schools are provided and maintained entirely out of public funds administered by Local Education Authorities. The volunary schools have for the most part been established by religious bodies. They receive various amounts of public money according to their sub-classifica-

tion into 'aided', 'controlled' and 'special agreement'.[4] All primary schools have a management body, some members of which are appointed by the L.E.A. Such bodies have no jurisdiction over the school curriculum, but all include the headteacher and (usually) a teacher representative; and all (or part of that body - usually the head and the chairman of the managers) play a part in staff appointments.

During 1976 - 1978 the average number of pupils per teacher (the head-teacher included) was 23.9; the average size of primary school about 224,[5] with a staff of ten. The average primary class size is thirty. Roughly 70% of primary teachers are women though almost 60% of head-teachers are men (if one excludes nursery schools).

Note on Pre-school provision

Many government statistics include pre-school with primary school provision. It should be noted that provision for children under the age of five years is as follows:- 1978 - 1979 over 200,000 children attending state Nursery Schools or Classes. Additionally, 215,000 attending Infants' Classes in Primary Schools. Thus, about 50% of all four-year-olds and about 15% of three-year-olds received state education. There are also many children receiving other forms of nursery education through the provision of voluntary and private bodies. About 25% of all 2 to 4 year-olds receive some pre-school education (state and independent schools - but not play-groups - combined).

Advisory/Inspectorate Bodies

Her Majesty's Inspectorate is the official body responsible for the inspection of all schools. There are currently about 460 HMIs in England

and Wales. It is their duty to review the content and provision of education and to advise the central Government on matters of policy. They also conduct courses for teachers and prepare advisory publications. Certain Standing Committees (termed Central Advisory Councils) were also permitted/established under the 1944 Education Act. These changed membership with each assignment,but have been responsible for major policy reviews and reports (such as the Plowden Report, 1967). Currently, the Government sees no need to appoint new councils, believing that their roles are sufficiently clearly carried out by other 'intermediate' bodies and sub-committees. There is a number of independent bodies which also advise on education. Principal of these is the Schools Council for Curriculum and Examinations. This was established in 1964 by order of the Secretary of State for Education, and is financed jointly by D.E.S. and L.E.A. funds.

There are 105 Local Education Authorities in England and Wales.(6) These are responsible for school provision, teachers' appointments and salaries, equipment and materials. They provide Local Inspectors or Advisers who play an important part in the administrative and decision-making structure, who advise teachers and heads and provide local in-service courses for teachers. They also often act as catalysts to new ideas - and, working alongside the considerable freedom enjoyed by primary head teachers, have been responsible for some of the notable educational changes and experiments within different Authorities. They work in close coordination with HMIs, providing joint courses and obtaining official 'encouragement' for certain local developments (e.g. open'plan schools, forms of community college, etc.) It is interesting to note that, since 1955 many L.E.A.s have used the term 'adviser' and not inspectors, but that during 1980 at least three

Authorities were debating reverting to the term inspector.[7] The L.E.A. advisers/inspectors usually have defined age-range/subject expertise and responsibility together with heavy office and administrative duties. For the most part they appear to be recruited from the ranks of successful teachers and head-teachers and follow a career pattern separate from the more purely administrative ones of education officers.

Accommodation and Resources

About half of all existing primary schools in use have been built since 1945. A substantial number of the others have been remodelled or extended. But 37% were (in 1977) officially regarded as overcrowded; six hundred thousand places were in 'temporary' accommodation and half of the pre-1946 classrooms (12,500) were smaller than 500 sq.ft. Of these schools 49% still had inadequate toilet facilities (outside lavatories, poor washing services, etc.).[8] The National Union of Teachers has emphasised how badly the English and Welsh school building area standards are when compared with the rest of Europe. For instance, teaching area per pupil = 7.2 m^2 in Denmark and 2.2 m^2 in Britain.[9]). Yet the official Department of Education and Science 1978 report on primary education states that classroom accommodation seemed 'reasonably adequate'.[10]

Current per capita expenditure on books and equipment is running at about £11.50 per child (1980 estimate). As the teachers' unionspoint out, this works out at about one penny per hour per child for all books and equipment. (About 6% of the Gross National Product is spent on public sector education, including the universities; £6.6 thousand million at 1978 prices).

Teacher Education and Training

From 1980 all entrants to primary teaching will be graduates. Normal entry will be via a three or four-year course leading to a Bachelor of Education degree. Such a course will have been taken in a Polytechnic Faculty of Education or in a College of Higher Education.(11) The degree will normally have been validated by the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA), though in some areas university validation operates. Considerably fewer entrants (less than 5%) currently come from University Departments, where the pattern is of a three or four-year degree course at a University followed by a one year post graduate Certificate in Education course. Many Polytechnics and Colleges of Higher Education also offer such one year professional courses. There is still a substantial number of primary teachers (well over 150,000) without a degree or any form of higher education other than the 'original' two-year training certificate (superseded by a three year course in 1963 and by a three/four year B.Ed., in most cases, in the 1970s). A substantial number of primary teachers hold Advanced Diploma or Advanced Certificates, usually gained after an in-service one or two year part-time course at a University Department, Institute or School of Education. Very few primary teachers hold Master's Degrees, but substantial numbers (over 5%, 1980 estimate) hold Open University first degrees or are preparing for them.(12)

It is difficult to typify standard 19[illegible] primary teacher education and training, but a reasonable example would be as follows:-

A three year (ord.) or four-year (hons.) degree course, unit structured, part continuous assessment, part dissertation with final written examination

the whole containing a substantial period of practice in schools (usually about 15+ weeks broken into three separate practices). After an introductory year, optional courses and chosen specialisms will allow teachers to specialise both in an age range (primary or secondary) and in certain subject areas (English, Maths, etc.). Additionally, in most cases, it is a possible to specialise in a social science discipline, either in parallel with the 'main' subject, or instead of it. Almost all institutions provide a three ten-week term academic year. All courses in England are internally and externally validated; that is external examiners from parallel institutions are appointed by the College validating body. These examiners monitor standards and report back to the bodies concerned. There seems little difference (in practice) between CNAA validation and University validation and standards appear roughly similar throughout England and Wales. Almost all current B.Ed. courses are now of the 'unit' type, though patterns of assessment emphasis, and aggregation of marks differ between validating bodies. All qualified primary teachers are awarded qualified teacher status or certification (B.Ed.), but must also serve a satisfactory year of probation in their first teaching post. In practice this probationary year means little more than satisfying the existing school head-teacher and local adviser that all is progressing reasonably well.

Primary School Ideologies

There is not one but many different (and often conflicting) beliefs on which primary teachers appear to base their practice. This is partly because of the rapidity of the changes which have occurred over the last forty years or so, partly because a variety of different responsibilities

has been laid upon the primary schools and partly because there have been markedly different emphases in and styles of training. This has probably been due to the fact that primary school 'roots' lie in the provision of the elements of an education for the working poor, that 'progressive' ideas from the thirties came up hard against the realities of selection for secondary schooling, the county minor scholarship, later the 'eleven-plus'; and, more recently, from the effects of the swing from streaming, of the Plowden Report of 1967 (which in a sense legitimised 'progressive' practice) and from the subsequent disenchantment with education as compensation for society's ills. As Galton et al say, English primary education has been, "very much the poor relation in the educational system, has been in a state of almost continuous transition throughout its short history, the result both of changes at the secondary level and of changing approaches to the education of young children. Evaluation of contemporary practice must take this into account."(13)

Until the eleven-plus was abolished - and before, when only the elements of education were to be provided, it was taken by many teachers of young children that the fundamental duty of schooling was to prepare children to serve the future society. At its most simplistic this could be interpreted as meaning that the individual interests of children must of necessity receive secondary consideration to projected societal needs and serve a selective system designed to provide real opportunity for the 'brightest' (at most, a fifth) of the national's children. But opposing such a view of the education of young children have been those who believed that the most worthwhile education was likely to be one based upon the immediate needs and interests of children, that "subsequent responsibilities and societal needs should be subordinated to the child's.

For the curriculum to be effective (they argued), both content and transaction must be in tune with the potentialities of the individual".(14) The degree of emphasis on one view or another is perhaps the simplest way of capturing the essentials of the competing ideologies. Both views have, of course, had to be incorporated in the primary curriculum. But from the 1960s, when the abolition of the eleven-plus was broadly established, through 1967 and the official confirmation of the more 'child-centred' perspective by the Plowden Report, until the middle 1970s, the acceptable stated ideology was more usually one emphasising the child's presumed needs. As we shall see later from consideration of the HMI (1978) reports and from the Leicester University (ORACLE Study) of 1980, that change in emphasis was often more imagined than real, more asserted and claimed to exist than measures of actual practice suggest. For the most part, the labels, 'progressive', 'child-centred', 'formal' have been shown to be meaningless. They have been important rallying cries for the faithful rather than detailed descriptions of what really does or does not go on.

2 CURRENT TRENDS AND ISSUES

a) General Organisation with the Primary School

Currently, the overall within-school organisation into classes or teaching groups tends to follow one of two major patterns. Many schools, because of constraints of numbers, staffing, buildings, also apply a mixture of both patterns. Such a 'mixed economy' is likely to increase markedly throughout England and Wales during the next decade as school reductions, closures and amalgamations take place.

Horizontal age grouping, either streamed or mixed ability. Classes are formed from roughly homogeneous age cohorts by year of entry; all the group being 'automatically' promoted to the next class each academic year. There are no standards in force. On entry into the Infant or Junior departments, children may form one, two, or three classes, depending on size of school and number admitted. At present, and in most LEAs 'rising' five year-olds are not admitted; all children must be five on entry. Such classes will usually contain the whole range of ability; and, in the Junior department (post seven years), the ensurance of an even ability spread into parallel classes may be aided by assessment data from Maths and English tests. Such data are not normally available on entry to the Infant department and there is as yet no national policy on entry assessment. Thus, in the Infants' the process of adjustment or sorting may be based on the gradual experience of child performance throughout the school year. Normally, however, minor variations in the spread of ability are ignored.

Streamed classes are virtually unknown in English Infants' schools nowadays, though at the Junior level there are still some large urban primary schools which stream children, (separating them into different classes, labelled A, B or C according to rough bands of ability). Such classes tend to be taught as complete units for all subjects; and such a division by streaming was relatively common (in excess of 60% schools) until the 1960s. Streaming was (and if operating is usually) based upon the results of standardised IQ tests set at seven or eight years of age.

Within the class, streamed or mixed ability, some form of 'setting' is very common. Setting involves the formation of small groups of roughly

common ability level in a particular subject. It is common to find fairly fluid sets in maths and English, for instance, though the practice is much less likely (except in terms of reading groups) in Infant schools.

Vertical or family grouping

A grouping of children of different ages into one class. This is very common in English Infant schools. Normally children of the whole Infant age range (5, 6 and 7 years) will be placed together. As the top group are transferred to the Junior department, so small reception groups beginning school will be admitted. In a large Infants school there may be four or five such classes operating roughly in parallel.

Vertical grouping has several advantages. It emphasises individual development and virtually precludes class-teaching as a whole; children progress at their own pace. It enables the teacher to concentrate on different groups at different times and it helps by admitting small numbers of children into an already well organised class. It is more like a family, containing older children to help younger ones, thus providing some stability over several years. Where there is more than one vertically grouped class, the interchange of equipment, pooling of resources and co-operative teaching ventures are somewhat more easily organised. But vertical grouping has disadvantages. It can be a real burden for an inexperienced teacher; recording and monitoring progress being especially onerous. It can sometimes result in too little stimulus for the older children. A wider range of apparatus and materials has to be available within the classroom. It cuts down opportunities for working and playing with peers. There can be a tendency for older children to overprotect or 'baby' younger ones.

Methods of working

A variety of working methods associated with organisation of staff, groups of children and the school plant may be employed within an overall organisation as set out in a) or b) above. Such methods do not, however, depend exclusively on particular modes of organisation. I have therefore set them out briefly as sub-categories.

Co-operative teaching (sometimes referred to as 'team teaching')

In practice cooperative teaching rarely seems to involve more than two staff of a primary school at any one time. It is a term employed where more than one teacher is responsible for the every-day work of a permanent group of children. Warwick has defined it as, "A form of organisation in which individual teachers decide to pool resources, interests and expertise in order to devise and implement a scheme of work suitable to the needs of their pupils and the facilities of their school".(15) By and large, its success depends upon two main features; the willingness of the teacher to cooperate, and sufficiently closely-linked practical facilities for the wide range of normal primary activities to go on with sixty or ninety pupils. Because of this latter feature, the importance of purpose-built facilities, it is less common than might be supposed (existing in about 5% of the 160 primary schools visited by the writer in the period 1976-80).

The integrated day

The style and type of integrated curriculum practised varies considerably from school to school involved. In essence it means that the children work on their own chosen topics for considerable periods of the day, but that it is the teacher's task to see that within each topic each child is developing visually and creatively, as well as progressing in a balanced

spread of basic skills. In this respect it often requires more teacher direction than may be supposed. A common pattern is for teachers to take a major topic or project centred around collective interest, and then to devise ways in which individual interest and systematic development of basic skills may take place. Such topics may last for a week or half a term. Monitoring and recording progress is usually particularly taxing; and currently many LEAs are concerned with devising recording systems in basic skills which are sufficiently flexible to be easily employed by teachers when operating an 'integrated day'. The integrated day is much more rare in junior departments.

Specialisation

In the present organisation of primary schools posts of responsibility exist for those of appropriate qualifications and experiences who are willing to advise upon or organise certain aspects of the curriculum throughout the age range. This rarely (except in the case of music) implies teaching the whole age range. Normally it involves designing curricula and helping with ideas and expertise. Typically graded posts in a group 4 (ten to twelve teachers) primary school will be about four. They are more usually in key aspects of the curriculum; e.g. maths, English, and in shortage or specialist areas such as science or music. (There is currently a grave shortage of maths and science specialists in English primary schools.) After conflicting, but largely adverse reports over the last decade, primary French, a clearly controversial area, seems likely to be either omitted from the curriculum altogether or become entirely the domain of the specialist.(16)

b) Falling rolls and changing school organisation

One major factor and three subsidiary ones are important in predicting school population in any given year. These are:-

i) projections of future births and an adjusted forecast (taking account of pre-natal mortality, morbidity, of population, etc),

and ii) projected number of pupils of compulsory school age,

iii) projected number of children under five,

iv) projected number of children over school age (post sixteen years).

All projections tend to be imprecise, and have tended to offer high, median and low variant possibilities. Beyond seven years' ahead projections become hazardous and increasingly inaccurate. For the last decade or so the DES has provided school population projections in their Reports on Education; and the latest (Nov. 1979, no. 96) shows a fall to under 4 million in primary school population by about 1986/7 and then a probable rise to above 4¼ million children about 1996. There has been a gradual fall in pupil numbers in state nursery and primary schools since 1973, from 5.25 million to about 4.65 million by 1980. An important result of this, bearing the common age-cohort organisation of primary schools, is the decline in the size of individual age groups. Collings says, "it would not be possible to reduce the number of schools in proportion to the reduction in pupil numbers," and that the most likely effect (between now and 1986) is "to lower the proportion of schools with less than 50 pupils and raise the proportion with between 200 and 300 pupils. The average school roll would be raised to around 170 and the average size of age group per school would be 32".(17) One of the oft-quoted consequences of the current fall in age cohorts entering school is that more

and more schools are having to organize vertically grouped classes in order to cope with the cuts in staffing which tend to parallel declines in school numbers. Additionally, even if the average size of the school declines, the L.E.A. has presumably to continue to employ the established non-teaching heads as non-teaching heads, though the Authority may have been able to reduce teaching staff overall. Consequently, reduction in school size will not necessarily mean equivalent reduction in staff. The problem is further exacerbated by the fact that teaching-heads of small schools (already established in the County) may have non-teaching head colleagues organising nearby schools not appreciably bigger. Further there are uneconomic aspects of a contraction in that smaller schools tend to have less homogeneous age groupings and demand more favourable staff ratios than larger schools if they are to survive and offer reasonable curricular coverage.

Overall, the fall in pupil numbers seems likely to be considerable during the first half of the 1980s and the average size of school, even if some are closed altogether, will decline markedly. Thomas points out that there will be very real problems in the school of fewer than eight teachers (the average may well be six or seven!) covering a range of work normally associated with current primary school practice, that some small schools will probably have to federate loosely or work together to provide advice, curriculum planning and expertise. He also reminds one that, though classes are likely to contain increasingly larger variations in age-range, the DES 1978 survey indicated "that the performance of children in these classes is likely, on average, to be less good than that of children in single-age classes unless special counter-balancing measures are taken. So far as the curriculum is concerned, one problem is to ensure that children in mixed age classes engage in as many of the widely taught items as is common in single-age classes".(18) Thus

available projections and recent informed comment point to some rather rapid changes in school organisation. School closures are likely to markedly increase and teacher redundancy/redeployment become a serious issue. Financial presures and the uneconomic aspects of scale reductions in teaching force and class-size will cause increased pressure on LEA administration.(19) Yet, by the mid 1990s it would seem reasonable to assume a projected primary school population of at least 4.5 million pupils. By then, the continuing decline in secondary school rolls may well ensure the retraining and redeployment of surplus secondary school teachers in order to provide the additional primary teaching force required.

All this leads one to conlude that a much slower level of primary school building is likely during the next decade. For the most part the utilisation and modification of existing premises seems likely to form a key feature in the LEAs meeting falling needs.

c) Curriculum Organisation and Teaching Style

The activities by which the curriculum is transmitted in English primary schools are many and varied. Underlying the practices are numerous factors, such as catchment area, age of staff, parental attitude, type of building, all of which have widely different affects on the organisation of a particular primary schools curriculum. But the overriding factor in the curriculum composition, organisation and practice is likely to be the beliefs and attitudes of the headteacher. The freedom of the headteacher and the concomitant (if lesser) freedom of the teacher in England to determine the curriculum produce some fairly wide discrepancies in practice, as indicated by the DES report of 1978. Traditionally, and

certainly since the early fifties, it would seem that the primary head teacher was responsible for determining and guiding the shape of the whole curriculum. This last decade, however, has seen a fairly marked change in such an attitude; a tendency to employ members of staff in posts of special responsibility (for a given subject area) has replaced the earlier 'grace-and-favour' distribution of graded posts carrying additional emoluments.

All recent evidence[20] points, however, to a curriculum still fairly traditional in many respects. By this I mean that, despite changes in teaching style and organisation, a central content focus upon and preoccupation with skills relating to literacy and numeracy (the basic skills) clearly exist in the majority of schools. Additionally, there is clear evidence to suggest that, though wide variations in style of transaction exist, good order and a high degree of teacher control are fairly typical of the last decade.[21] Galton et al especially note that the 'progressive' teaching as defined in the Plowden Report seemed hardly to exist in practice, saying that though individualisation of work and attention were widespread phenonema in their observations, discovery learning in the true sense was not. They elaborate the current contradictions thus:- "with classes averaging thirty in size, a high degree of individualisation and attention imposes a management problem ..... (and) the teacher's interactions with individual pupils ..... primarily of a task supervision or 'routine' type..... In this situation, wider pedagogical considerations are inevitably ignored or left out of account in the interest of keeping the class as a whole busily engaged on the tasks in hand."[22] Galton et al conclude that, from their research observations, based on a longitudinal study over three years upon some fifty-eight classrooms,

Plowden's 'progressive' ideology was largely impractical and, in its complete form, almost totally non-existent. It should also be pointed out that, unlike the controversial Bennett study[23] of four years' ago these researchers used descriptions based on actual observation and not upon questionnaire approaches. Their study used instruments painstakingly developed by Boydell and others[24] and attempted to meet criticism of classroom observation technique (such as those of Dunkin and Biddle, 1974).[25] The ORACLE research has met with widespread approval during 1980 apparently being the most meticulous study yet of actual primary school teaching methods and curriculum content.[26] Overall, their research has shown that controversial views of primary schools (whether labelled 'traditional' or 'progressive') in no way match the reality. Class teaching still appears to be the main means of developing enquiry skills and attention to detail, careful organisation and good order were marks of teachers who gained the 'active' attention of pupils. Furthermore, the ORACLE study indicates, like the DES Report of 1978 by Her Majesty's Inspectors, that children who did best on tests of basic skills (literacy and numeracy) were those who studied a wide range of topics, and who were typically involved in differing types of approaches, and activities at different times. In all, three influential recent reports (see note 24) make roughly similar points. Taken together, these may be interpreted as:

1 Modern primary school 'philosophy' as represented in the Plowden Report has not led to markedly different curriculum content. Primary teachers are still pre-occupied with basic skills;

2 that few, if any, schools have ever implemented the much-vaunted Plowden methods in-toto;

3 that class and group teaching still predominate, though there is a

marked tendency to more individualisation of assignments and evaluation;

4 that the post 1975 backlash against what has been caricatured as 'sloppy' 'Plowden methodology is both unnecessary and ill-informed;

5 that standards of school work in general, particularly for the more able children, are rising and that they are noticeably better in schools which appoint 'semi-specialist' teachers to advise, shape or hold responsibility for a particular area of the curriculum.

In addition, H.M.I. came to the conclusions in their survey that variations in class size (between 25 and 35) made little difference in terms of pupil achievement. As Auriol Stevens emphasises in a recent newspaper article, it would seem that the (still to be published) later research of the ORACLE team, when taken with the DES survey and the current work of Bennett, all suggest that "the quality of the teacher is far more important than the size of the class".(27) Stevens quotes Bennett as saying, "the total amount of time actively engaged on a particular topic is the most important determinant of achievement in that topic". (ibid)

(d) Curriculum Content

The 1978 survey of primary education in England revealed marked inconsistencies in the course of the curriculum and argues for greater uniformity and consistency. H.M.I.s record that all the evidence showed that primary teachers still accorded high priority to literacy and that national reading standards appear to be gradually rising. All classes with 7 or 9-year-olds(28) made use of graded rading schemes;

reading material was more likely (than any other aspect of the curriculum) to be carefully matched to the ability levels of the children, 85% of schools investigated had schemes of work on language. The matching of work to ability was best overall for the least able children, less clearly well-matched for the most able children.(29) This latter finding was a common feature on all aspects of the curriculum examined. But H.M.I. considered that not everything about language teaching was as good as the teaching of basic literacy. They say that once skills of decoding have been established, the more advanced and necessary skills of scanning, efficient /information - retrieval and interpretation need to be taught. "The teaching of these more advanced skills did not occur in three-quarters of eleven year-old classes and in the remaining quarter there was seldom planned and regular practice".(30) Considerable attention is also still paid to mathematics and in both English and Mathematics the survey found that primary teachers (contrary to some of the more lurid recent criticisms) spent a large portion of curricular time on the basic rules of number and upon computation, measurement and calculations involving sums of money. There were, however, serious weaknesses of application. (Only 28% of eleven-year-olds could interpret line graphs; 40% could not say which of the four rules of number, when applied to a given pair, would produce the smallest answer).

The H.M.I. survey divided the currriculum into five sections; language and literacy; mathematics; science; aesthetics; social studies. These are fairly arbitrary divisions. Modern primary schools tend to leave the 'blocking' of the time-table to the class teacher (after the insertion of times for shared hall-space, music-room space, etc.). But

many primary schools, especially junior departments, still appear to insulate one period or subject from another. Thematic work appears more likely in history or social studies, less so in English or Maths. H.M.I. argued that the basic skills were more likely to be successfully learnt when carried over into other subject areas saying, "The general educational progress of children and their competence in basic skills appear to have benefitted where they were involved in a programme of work that included art and craft, history and geography, music and physical education, and science, as well as language, mathematics and religious and moral education, although not necessarily as separate items on a timetable".(31)

An aspect of the H.M.I. survey which is receiving a good deal of attention from L.E.A. advisers is that the report maintained that it was important to keep the curriculum within bounds, and that more careful discussion was necessary between schools (secondary and primary) on agreed content 'in accordance with national needs'.(32) To this end, there has been a greater stress on continuity between primary and secondary schools during the last two years; and many Teachers' Centres throughout the country have been encouraged to involve primary and secondary teachers in discussion groups.(33)

Little information exists on any national patterns of time allocation in subject areas of the curriculum. Evidently schools spent a very substantial period of each week upon the basic skills. Indeed, if one includes the extension of these into general aspects of listening talking, recording, then 70% of a school week could be said to involve basic skills. Certainly mathematics is not likely to receive less than

five hours attention per week (20%) of time; and English probably an even greater proportion, especially in early stages of acquiring reading skills.

The range of the curriculum is also affected by local variation, staff shortage, and organisational compromises, though the 1978 survey found reasonable homogeneity in about 80% of schools considered.(34) One may therefore take the range of work it listed as roughly indicative of current practice. Areas of the curriculum more usually taught seem to be:-

Maths

Language (including reading skills, literature and 'story' periods)

Science and/or Nature Study)
) An increasing amount
Geography)) of health education
) or Environmental studies)
History)

Physical Education (including usually dance and games and swimming)

Religious Education

Art)
)
Craft)

French (a 'minority' subject)

Drama

Music (35)

Overall, H.M.I. felt that science was relatively poorly taught. A considerable proportion of teachers lacked necessary skills and there seemed (and seems) to be little systematic development of experimental work. "Science is the outstanding example and one in which no individual

item of observational or experimental work occurred in as many as 80 per cent of the classes at any age..... over 40 per cent of the schools had schemes of work in science but there was little evidence of these programmes being implemented."(36)

It is clear from the Leicester ORACLE studies and from the DES Report of 1978 that flexible grouping within classes, individual and programmed assignments, increasing emphasis on simple but efficient (Local Authority - wide) record keeping, all form a common part of the present picture of English primary classrooms. It is equally clear that there is an increasing preoccupation by Local Authority Advisers and H.M.I. with Mathematics, science and to a lesser extent health education. These are merely reflections of larger trends and emphases within society at large. But whilst teachers are pressing ahead with maths and some health education, there seems little evidence (1980) of staff becoming availale for primary science, and there are clearly relatively few in-service courses on the subject. One can only conclude that deficiencies in that area of the curriculum will be a continuing feature during the next decade.

During the last five years - and especially since the publication of the Schools Council/Health Education Council material "All About Me' (A HE course, 5-13 years) there seems evidence of some uptake in this area of the curriculum. This has been further aided by extensive education/social science research grants this year in the field of Health Education generally.

29

It is, however, in the field of mathematics that there seems real evidence of activity and movement. The Assessment of Performance Unit (set up 1976 in part to report on national means of assessing standards) chose mathematics as the subject of its first report and, in cooperation with the National Foundation for Education Research (NFER) who conducted a survey of 13,000 eleven year-olds, produced its Primary Survey Report No. 1 in 1978.(37) The Report is commonly taken in conjunction with the DES 1978 Primary Report, though its data are much more detailed and were gathered two to three years later than that for the Primary Report. Both reports reflect the increasing interest about educational accountability and standards expressed in this country (as in a number of others). The APU found that most children surveyed were capable of simple application of the fundamental concepts and skills to which they had been introduced, but that there was, "a fairly sharp decline in performance as pupils' understanding of the concepts is probed more deeply and as their basic knowledge has to be applied in more complex or in a familiar contexts". As in the Primary Report, the investigators found weaknesses in extrapolation from graphs and diagrams generally.

Using the two 1978 Reports as indicators of what is happening and has happened in the primary curriculum, it is clear that there never has been a marked swing to a totally 'Plowden' philosophy and approach. Or put more simply, rhetoric and practice have not been congruent. Instead, the picture which emerges (and one which also emerges from various other H.M.I. and Schools Council reports)(39) is of a fairly slow rate of change in methodology; one much more akin to a 'moderately child-centred, mixed with teacher control' picture of it all, than to the images

conjured in the middle 1960s by the Plowden Report. 'Modern' maths would seem to have been well-tempered with didactic exposition more akin to the more formal traditions of the past. Nor does this 'lack of progressivism' seem to worry parents or H.M.I. In one of the most recent official pronouncements on the curriculum range of methodology, "It is only provision of observational and experimental science that is seriously lacking in many primary schools; and the teaching of French that is sometimes attempted when conditions are not suitable. More extensive discussion is required on the levels to which work could and should be taken (HMI mention geography and history)..... and should help to improve continuity from one class or school to the next".(40) This is an echo of the 1978 report on primary education. The 1980 discussion paper then re-emphasises the important contributions of recent working parties of teachers, LEA advisers and inspectors in providing guidelines for the curriculum "particularly, but not only, in mathematics".(41)

(a) Accountability and Assessment

During the 1960s and early 1970s the language of education was one of expansion, diversity, and reform. It was felt that the curriculum, teaching styles, materials and modes of assessment needed to be more flexible, and it was claimed (by the late 1960s) that primary schools were spearheading a revolution in practice. Such a 'revolution' was often described in terms of 'Plowden' practice, following the report of 1967.(42) Nowadays, such heady stuff is regarded somewhat more sceptically. Changes have taken place. No doubt the majority of schools are more humane, more flexible. But the rhetoric of the last five years has been quite different. It has been concerned to stress the measurement,

the appraisal, the monitoring of standards. It has required of schools that they become more amenable to public scrutiny, that they explain themselves in terms the public can understand.

Both the above pictures are caricatures. In the first case, as we can see from recent research studies, in most cases, primary schools never did become so 'flexible' or 'progressive' that they lost sight of the need to provide fairly thorough grounding in the basics. In the second case, a lot of the criticism (much of which seemed to be fuelled by the political context of the 'Tyndale Affair'[43] and aided by misconceptions surrounding Bennett's research of 1976[42]) has been exaggerated and misplaced. Nevertheless, political discussion of education fuelled the fires (characterised as the 'Great Debate' in England, stemming from a phrase used by Callaghan when delivering a speech at Ruskin College, Oxford;) contraction in the birthrate and the economy became increasingly evident, and the context and tone of the last four years has been sober, concerned with accountability and more careful assessment of standards. The Government response was, as early as 1974/75 to initiate the survey which resulted in the 1978 Primary Report; and to encourage the establishment of the DES Assessment of Performance Unit.

As Dearden says, "the Primary Report performed a useful function in getting ill-informed and sensationalist critics off the backs of the primary schools". Plowden ideas, were undoubtedly catalyst to greater individualisation, and more carefully matched work; they no doubt hastened grouping practical and a more flexible attitude as well, but did not change the

schools to totally radical, child-centred 'progressive' institutions as sometimes depicted in the popular press. The 1978 Report it will be recalled did evidence a reasonable match between ability and level of provision in most areas of the curriculum, but also exposed certain inadequacies in the curriculum for able pupils.

The lessons learned from the assessment of literacy and maths (in the report); the lessons gained from the APU, 1978 maths survey, and the APU Science Progress Report of 1977/78 all pointed to the need for teachers to think through their techniques of class recording and assessment much more clearly. The results have been the formation of working groups of teachers, advisers and inspectorate such that every LEA in the country has over the two years 1978-80 engaged in some form of discussion/preparation of assessment procedures in (at least) the basic skills. This is a radical change for English primary education. It does not yet imply compatibility of recording systems from Authority to Authority, but it does mean that many such groups have produced standard guidelines on assessment for teachers, using the Bullock Report,(45) the Primary Report, the APU Maths Report and various Schools Council project reports as common basis for considering minimal curricula.

Much information on different modes of assessment is currently being gathered by and becoming available from the Assessment of Performance Unit. In 1980/81 seven more surveys will have taken place, two in mathematics, two in language, and three in science.(46) The big problem will be to encourage simple yet effective means of recording and

assessment which aid the teacher rather than hinder him, which fit into current moderately flexible and modestly child-oriented practice without curtailing it. As one teacher said recently, 'It is often a question of either weighing the pig or fattening it! Too much of the former prevents the latter, but the latter can't take place efficiently without the former. Assessment is basically about diagnosis; helping children to improve performance'. (47)

An aspect of the debate which seems now somewhat less vociferous and forceful is that of accountability and overall standards. In setting up working bodies, most LEAs seem to have taken a great deal of pressure off. Nevertheless, there are clear indications of:- 1) a general move towards greater codification of advice for establishing parent-teacher associates (by LEAs); 2) an increasing tendency for primary schools to produce brochures setting out philosophy, aims, practice, details of curriculum, modes of assessment, etc; 3) clearly greater involvement of primary and secondary teachers in joint working parties on assessment and continuity; 4) national monitoring surveys of language and mathematics (at 11 and 16 years) by the National Foundation of Educational Research carried out on behalf of APU for DES.

It will be hard to separate some of the above positive elements of 'openness' from the inevitable problems associated with falling rolls, amalgamation and closure of primary schools with which English education is likely to be pre-occupied over the next five years or so. These will be political issues of considerable power in local politics at least.

It should be noted that standardised tests in English and Arithmetic are common throughout Local Education Authority Primary Schools. Some Authorities advise their use at least twice through the junior school.

In most cases, however, their use, choice of timing and type (usually NFER goup tests) are aspects of assessment left to the headteacher's discretion.

3 FORECASTS AND SUMMARIES

Many of the substantive issues contained in recent reports have already been discussed under the respective headings in this paper and will be returned to briefly in this final section. It seems, important, however, to try to identify and emphasise some of these recent key publications which give an indication of the future.

Indications of policy

The 1978 report Primary Education in England. Though officially a survey document, it has been widely interpreted as major policy guidelines. Its emphasis, as Dearden has said, is 'un-Plowden like', "The importance of an ordered and progressive curriculum is assured. There is to be the teaching of groups round a blackboard. Special posts for curricular areas are recommended and special curricular strengths of staff are to be exploited. As rolls contract, freed rooms are seen in terms of possible specialist purposes, ... there is the unmistakable impression of thinking from secondary practices downwards rather than, as with Plowden, thinking from infant school practices upwards."(48) But the report is really just as vague as was the Plowden Report in how certain curricular advances are to be achieved. It would seem that much is to be left to individual and local choice; and on how the more able children can be more carefully and systematically taught, the report is not explicit.

The APU document Assessment - the American Experience cannot be ignored,[49] since this report of the 1976 visit by the Deputy Director of the NFER, and the then head of the APU acts as a 'straw in the wind' for later pronouncement and emphasis. For example, the tone of the document's introduction is interesting, "Public concern over standards is particularly associated with a concern about changing styles of education, in which the progressive, freer, pupil-centred approach is compared with the traditional, more rigorous, teacher directed style. This distinction is simplistic since educational change does not proceed along a single axis. However, it remains true that different teaching styles, accompanied by different organisations of schools and different groupings of pupils within schools, are all affecting educational performance in ways which are difficult to quantify".[50] Reading between the lines, the writers are critical of the American National Assessment of Educational Progress. They explicitly state that they wish the APU to provide findings of interest and use to the individual teacher, not to so much to compare one school with another. They felt that the NAEP dissemination and publicisation left much to be desired - and stress a concern for the APU to try to reach a variety of audiences as widely and simply as possible. It is important not to underestimate the different style between USA ideology and practice and the subsequent methods of the APU. The APU and other members of the HMI have worked very closely with research bodies, LEA advisers and teachers over the last four years. The net result is a much lower level of suspicion by practising teachers than that which

appeared to exist originally (when the APU was formed).

In 1979 there appeared the DES Report on Local Authority Arrangements for the School Curriculum.[51] This sets out the results of 104 LEA replies on six areas for consideration; namely: local arrangement for co-ordination and development; curricular balance and breadth; selected subject areas; transition between schools; school records; and preparation for working life. It was clear from this report that few Local Authorities produced explicit policy statements on the curriculum. (Maths and French in primary schools, and science in primary/middle schools being exceptions that concerned the younger age groups). But many Authorities were developing and had developed policy statement, and actions, as regards assessment. In the preamble to the report the following statements occur:

(The Secretaries of State) "believe they should seek to give a lead in the process of reaching a national consensus on a desirable framework for the curriculum and consider the development of such a framework a priority for the education service";[52] and, "the Secretaries of State have invited HM Inspectorate to formulate a view of a possible curriculum on the basis of their knowledge of schools".[53]

It is also informative to note the number of research projects, currently supported by the DES, which concentrate on assessment or evaluation, (including diagnostic procedures). Certainly, we are entering an era of lively interest in assessment, an era heralding the beginning of mass testing by the LEAs.

In terms of what actually constituted present primary school teaching style and practice, there seems little doubt that Inside the Primary Classroom[55] provides the most thorough, up-to-date and apparently accurate picture of primary practice. This research (the first of some four research reports due from Leicester University) clearly shows a picture not dissimilar to that of the 1978 Primary Report. There have been big changes in primary schools over the last fifteen or twenty years, but these appear to have stabilized. Flexible forms of classroom organisation do exist and aspects of individualised education are fairly common, but teacher control remains tight - even within 'integrated' day and 'informal' or team-taught systems. Pupils are active and involved, but substantial attention to basics and a high degree of teacher direction are evident.

Ten predictions

Finally, therefore, the picture of primary education in the 1980s and the immediate trends may be set out briefly as follows:

1 Projected falls in primary school numbers mean that many schools will find themselves with less than a 'one class entry'. Mixed-age classes and forms of vertical grouping are thus bound to increase such that possibly 70% of all primary schools will have to consider some mixed-age groups. (In view of the 1978 Primary Report in which HMI expressed preference for single-age cohorts, this is bound to be a source of conflict and friction.) The number of School buildings in use may be reduced to about 21,000+. The political turmoil involved in attempted closure of small schools will be considerable.

2 All Local Education Authories are formulating clearer assessment procedures and (almost all) have already provided recording systems in literacy and numeracy at the primary level. School record systems will become more diagnostically oriented and compatible (similar); and the more careful matching of materials, concepts, ideas to groups of pupils is a substantive issue in all this.

3 Both DES and LEA have frequently identified greater specialisation as a source of future primary development. More LEAs have advised headteachers on the appropriateness or otherwise of posts of special responsibility such that there is some evidence of pressure to appoint specialists in areas of identified national need. (Some of these will be redundant (retrained?) secondary school teachers.)

4 Grants in Health Education - and the dissemination of material have increased dramatically. More health/hygiene/social education courses are becoming a recognised, if minor, part of the primary curriculum.

5 The position of French in the primary school curriculum is equivocal. It would seem that, unless greater specialisation can be encouraged (and finance is not forthcoming for this), French is likely to decline. Currently it is taught in less than 15% of English and Welsh primary schools.

6 All primary teachers entering the profession will be graduates; yet 'method' and professional courses are continually being squeezed by the demands for more 'academic' work in the foundation disciplines.

7 'Accountability' and the issues raised by the Taylor Report[56] seem to have produced a climate of greater sensitivity to parents by schools. More PTAs, more school 'prospectuses' and more interchange of ideas between the school, the parents and the local community thus seem to be in evidence.

8 National and local expenditure cuts have resulted in fewer teachers being released for full-time in-service courses throughout the country. This means that the pattern of in-service education is changing to variants of part-time, day release, short-course, provision. Additionally, teachers are 'officially' encouraged in priority curriculum areas and discouraged in those deemed inappropriate or considered not relevant to the needs of the school. The implications for providing bodies, especially the universities, are considerable.

9 DES and government policy is avowedly that of drafting guidelines for minimal or basic curricula - and for its assessment, though it seems that this latter will be more flexible than originally assumed.

10 In the long run (ten to fifteen years) a modest expansion of primary education may again be necessary as the birth-rate rises.

In the 1980 proposals by the Secretaries of State the values "against which any substantial element of the school curriculum may be tested"[59] are put forward:-

i) to help pupils develop lively, enquiring minds, the ability to question and argue rationally and to apply themselves to tasks and physical skills;

ii) to help pupils acquire knowledge and skills relevant to adult life and employment in a fast-changing world;

iii) to help pupils to use language and number effectively;

iv) to instil respect for religion and moral values, and tolerance of others races, religions and ways of life;

v) to help pupils understand the world in which they live, and the interdependence of individuals, groups and nations;

vi) to help pupils appreciate human achievements and aspirations.

The Secretaries of State suggest that there is 'plenty of scope' for discussion of these, but that what is important is that all concerned, "should recognise that schools exist for the pursuit of such aims, and judge the curricula and work of schools by the effectiveness which they contribute to their achievement".[58] They go on to say that, in the future, they hope that Local Authorities will annually audit the school curriculum and that together with the schools the establishment

of 'self-assessment procedures' would be valuable. They indicate very clearly that the reports of HMI and other agencies, the signs of diversity in educational practice in general, all lead them to conclude that it is now time to offer firm guidance over key elements of the English School curriculum, and its assessment.

It should now be clear from this brief summary that the 'backdrop' to the action during the next decade is one of contraction in pupil numbers combined with a more clearly centralised view of the curriculum. In primary schools this may go along with consolidation of the modest post-Plowden advances in teaching style and organisation, but will clearly be coupled with greater emphasis on (presumed) societal need and certainly with much greater local Authority involvement in recording, assessment and diagnosis.(59) Inevitably, schools will be of smaller average size and there may be considerable teacher redundancy.

Goodlad said, "Our schools will never match our rhetoric; nor will they solve the troublesome extant problems of our respective societies. What they can do, and should do, however, is to engaged the self most of the time in that which is worth learning".(60) Many of those connected with English primary education apparently feel that, for the most part, primary schools have been so engaged.(61) My own interpretation of the evidence would be that they are right. The government and Schools Council reports, the ORACLE studies, can all be seen as indicating a modest success, though with certain problems of organisation and curricular matching still to be met. The excessive claims of the 'radically progressive', as much as those of the Black Paper writers,

have been shown to be false. Primary education enters the 1980s in a calmer and less hysterical atmosphere, but with some critical revisions still to make.

A Postscript

Crystal-ball gazing no longer brings the penalty of being burned at the stake, but those who indulge in it are nevertheless likely to ridicule and criticism if the guesswork is very wide of the mark. It would, however, be improper not to point out that, though little explicit research in primary education is yet apparent, sociologists and others concerned with sexism as a force in English society are beginning to turn their gaze on early childhood education.(62) To me this seems right and proper. Whereas three-quarters of the labour force are women, threequarters of those holding the most powerful posts are men. Further, whereas Early Childhood Education was once the traditional preserve of women, especially as principals of colleges, advisers, inspectors, etc. it is now clear that men dominate in those areas too. Masculine and feminine sterotypes are very much 'at home' in ECE. From text books to tidiness the crudest of constructs are employed. There is room for much research into various connected aspects of the classroom culture. Primary schools may be not the first step in role-pressurisation, but theyclearly contribute to a sexist society. The work of Rosemary Deem and her colleagues is currently receiving a lot of attention in England. I believe that pressure for research in areas associated with sexism will increase; and that primary school culture is about to receive much greater exposure than before.

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* Note: I have tried to include here only those writings which have seemed politically or educationally powerful and which may have been catalytic to change in primary education.

‡ Denotes recent and ongoing research.

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1 England and Wales are treated by the Department of Education and Science as representing one system. The different, and legally separate, Scottish provision is not included.

2 Depending on their age ranges, Middle Schools are classified as 'Primary' or 'Secondary'. In 1976 about 650 were deemed primary and 500 secondary.

3 See section 2 of this report for further details.

4 Nearly 10,000 of all schools (primary and secondary) maintained by Local Education Authorities in England and Wales are voluntary schools; 5,900 are Church of England, 2,660 Roman Catholic, 370 belong to other bodies.

5 1978 figures; taken from DES Trends in School Population, Report on Education no. 96, HMSO., November, 1979.

6 Including the Isles of Scilly (off SW Coast of England).

7 Somerset LEA did so, from August 1980.

8 16,300 new schools, primary and secondary, have been built since 1945. Of these about 3,000 have been secondary institutions, C.O.I. (Reference Division) Education in Britain (9th ed.) pamphlet no. 7, HMSO,, 1979.

9 NUT., Primary Questions, NUT Pub. London, 1979.

10 DES., Primary Education in England, HMSO., 1978.

11 Some thirty Polytechnic Departments and seventy Colleges of Higher Education plus various 'free standing' Colleges exist at present.

12 Of the 5,844 teachers involved in the DES survey, graduate status was more usual among most recently qualified teachers. 10% of the total had university degrees, of which almost half were B.Ed. degrees.

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24 The three referred to here are:-

a) Bassey, M. op cit., 1978.

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25 Dunkin, M.J. and Biddle, B.J. The Study of Teaching, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974. See also Solomon, D. and Kendall, A.J. Children in Classrooms, Praeger Publishers, 1979.

26 ORACLE being the Observational Research and Classroom Learning Evaluation project based at the University of Leicester. Part of the research is published in Galton, M., et. al., op cit., 1980.

27 Stevens, A. 'Primary Purpose', The Observer, Sept. 7th, 1980.

28 The survey examined the work of a representative sample of 7, 9 and 11 year-old children in 1,127 classes in 542 schools.

29 Except in the case of music which was the area of the curriculum most carefully matched to all levels of the curriculum. HMI attribute this to the high degree of specialist teaching involved.

30 DES., op.cit., 1978, p.52.

31 DES., op cit., 1978, p.114.

32 ibid (my emphasis).

33 This is particularly so in respect of those groups of teachers involved in formulating new assessment and recording procedures in conjunction with LEA advisers.

34 H.M.I. are careful to say that the range they considered should not necessarily be considered as the minimal curriculum.

35 A subject listing of those areas taught in schools visited locally.

36 DES., op cit., 1978, p.113

37 Assessment of Performance Unit (DES) Mathematical Development, Primary Survey Report No. 1, HMSO., 1978.

38 See for instance Ward, M. Mathematics and the 10 Year-Old, Schools Council Working Paper, 61, Evans/Methuen, 1979.

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43 The Auld inquiry into William Tyndale Junior School, 1975.

44 Bennett, N. op cit., 1976.

45 DES., A Language for Life (Bullock Report), HMSO., 1975.

46 These APU surveys will examine the performance of 11, 13 and 16 year age cohorts. Currently an SSRC funded project (under the direction of Dr. R. Wood, University of London Institute of Education) is concerned with evaluating the testing activities of LEAs. A national survey is being carried out, from which some 25 Authorities will be selected for detailed case study during 1981-1982. Part of the project team's brief is to examine the activities of the LEAs and the APU.

47 Put somewhat more elegantly in, DES., Primary Education in England, HMSO., 1978, p.115

48 Dearden, R.F. 'The Primary Survey: an assessment' in Richards, C. (ed) Primary Education: Issues for the Eighties, A. & C. Black, 1980, p.20.

49 DES., (APU) Assessment - the American Experience, HMSO., 1978.

50 DES. (APU) op cit., 1978, p.1.

51 DES Local Authority Arrangements for the School Curriculum, Report on Circular 14/77 Review, HMSO., 1979.

52 DES. op cit., 1979, pp.6-7.

53 Ibid

54 About 40 school projects are currently listed. At least fifteen seem concerned with some aspects of assessment. DES. Current Educational Research Projects supported by DES., HMSO., 1979.

55 Galton, et al., op cit., 1980.

56 DES., A New Partnership for our Schools (The Taylor Report), HMSO., 1977.

57 DES., A Framework for the School Curriculum (Proposals for consultation by the Secretaries of State for Education & Science and for Wales), HMSO., Jan. 1980, p.5.

58 Ibid

59 It should be recalled, however, that assessment was not neglected in the Plowden Report (para 551 recommended re curring national surveys).

60 Goodlad, J. 'What Schools are For', in Trends in Education, no. 1, 1978, p.49.

61 See for instance, Marsh, L. 'A Forward Look', in Richards, C. (ed) op cit., 1980, pp. 181-188.

62 Clarricoates, K. 'The Importance of being Ernest,Emma, Tom, Jane. The Perception and Categorization of Gender Conformity and Gender Deviation in Primary Schools', in Deem, R. (ed) Schooling for Women's Work, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980.

Appendix 1

NOTES ON PRIMARY EDUCATION REPORT

A. WHY WAS IT SET UP?

(Main survey began in 1975, so decisions and pilot studies are at least as early as 1974.)

Four main reasons :-

1 Eight years after Plowden (1967) what is happening? How is it being implemented?

2 First clues about falling birth-rate - forward planning needed.

3 Back-lash against progressive methods - need facts and figures. Black papers.

4 Accountability issue.

I Plowden (1967) had recommended and given official sanction to many of the changes taking place: child-centred education, emphasis on the individual, need for positive discrimination to help disadvantaged (EPAs), need to involve parents in education.

Need to know what is going on - how have these changes helped? Where are the gaps? Report is an attempt to find out by direct observation.

II Political awareness of implications of the falling birth-rate. We must be sure of what is happening - expect massive cut-backs in education, where and how? - Need information on schools.

III Beginnings of the back-lash against progressive child-centred teaching methods - need objective assessment.

Black Papers, Bennett's research at Lancaster - Teaching Styles and Pupil Progress, William Tyndale - total breakdown of communication taken as a criticism of methods in general.

IV Following on from III - the growing demand for accountability and evaluation in primary schools. (No Taylor Report yet, but discussion was going on.)

B. HOW THE RESEARCH WAS DONE, AND BY WHOM?

By HMIs going into schools, testing and observing.

There was a pilot study (Nov. 1974) to test use of questionnaires and testing, adapted in the light of findings.

Then main study:- divide selection of sample into three stages:-

Stage 1 - 542 school chosen, a random stratified sample using these criteria :-

a Region
b Size of year groups within school (i.e. 1,2,3 form entry)
c Type of school:-

- Junior/Infant
- J.M.I.
- First School
- First & Middle (no separate middle schools included)

Stage 2 - look at one class in each age group in each school- on grounds that HMIs' time better spent in as many schools as possible. These age groups - 7s, 9s, 11s.

Stage 3 - NFER tests used on children for objective assessment - 50% of children in the class tested (unless 20 children - then everyone).

Procedures

Schools informed they were selected, testing during summer term.

HMI spent one preliminary visit and ONE full-scale visit in 1½ - 3 days spent in each school, depending on number of children to be tested.

School knew several weeks beforehand - had to fill in questionnaires

1 To Head - asks about written guide lines schemes of work, wants brief outline of literacy, maths, science, social and moral aesthetic programme. So already science is given a central place in enquiry (do not ask for scheme for history, geography- literacy covers reading, speaking and writing).

Also asks about transfer communications, rel. with parents - help in school - need for more in-service courses.

2 Class teacher's questionnaire - covers grouping, streaming, setting, withdrawal of slow and bright children, amount of additional help, which in-service courses would be useful.

∴ HMIs have three levels of information on each school:-

- questionnaire
- personal observation
- NFER tests

Various areas they were told to look for - language and literacy, maths, science (more space given in description to science than to the teaching of reading) pp. 212-214, social abilities, geography and history, organisation and methods.

Test administered - in reading, maths, NFER -

A Reading test - at 11, sentence completion test (60 items) (actual test not in report).

Maths - covers (at 11) geometry, graphical representation, handling everyday situations, properties of whole numbers and several others (50 items).

Five main areas of recommendation:-

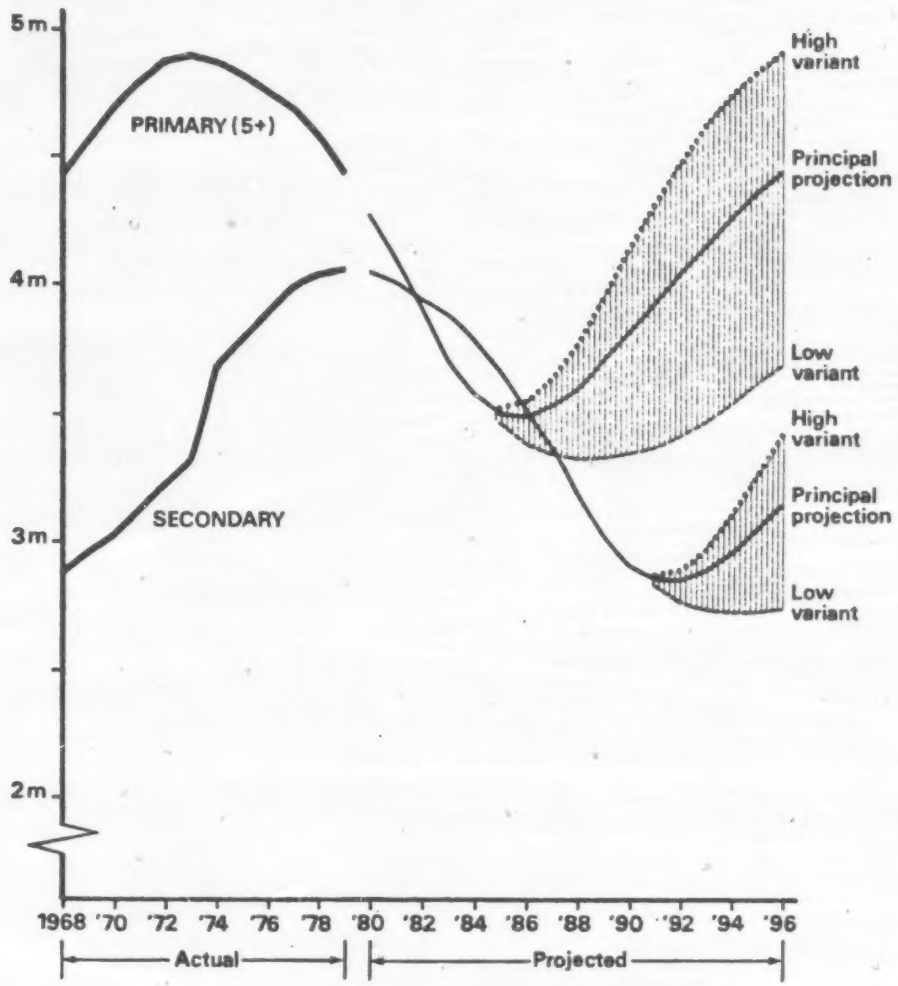
1 Science teaching
2 Deployment of teachers, organisation of schools
3 Concern for 3 r's - and a move strongly towards single age-group classes (not compatible with falling rolls).
4 Increased accountability to more objective monitoring.
5 More programmes of learning for able children (esp. in reading?).

Appendix 2 (taken from)

DES Report on Education: Trends in School Population, No. 96, Nov. 1979, pp.3/4

Chart C

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY PUPIL NUMBERS



OUTLOOK FOR THE 1980s AND BEYOND

As regards total school population, the education service stands on the brink of an especially rapid period of declining numbers. The pupil population is likely to fall from a little under 9 million at present to 8 million by 1983, with the prospect of a further fall to below 7½ million before the end of the decade. That some upturn is likely after 1990 has been confirmed by the latest number of births but the range of possibilities

remains large. Numbers could either recover equally quickly - to 9 million by the late 1990s - or show little such recovery. The very large area of uncertainty illustrated by the different between these 'high' and 'low' variants necessitates continuous and flexible planning.

Considered separately, the outlook for the primary and secondary elements varies. Chart C shows a similar 'wave' pattern for each sector, with a fall from maximum to minimum of around 30 per cent, but whereas primary school rolls have already been declining for some years secondary school numbers nationally will begin to do so only this academic year (1979/80). However, the decline in primary school pupil numbers that has already taken place is only one-third of the total decline from the 1973 peak that can be forecast from known births. By the early 1980s the traditional large excess of primary school pupils over secondary will have disappeared However, if birth rates increase as postulated under the 'principal' or 'high variant' projections primary pupil numbers will again be increasing in the late 1980s. For the secondary age range, regardless of variant, the fall will be sustained until at least the beginning of the 1990s.